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ST 650 Science and Christian Faith

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Course Syllabi - submitted for approval

Course Title: ST650 Science and Christian Faith

Hours/Units of Credits: 3

Proposed Nomenclature and Level: ST650

Prerequisites: ST501

Name of Professor: Dr David Wilkinson

Anticipated Enrollment Limitations: None

Competencies to be developed by the student:

This tutorial is designed for students with special interest in the fields of science and theology. The course will be graded on the "A" to "F" scale.

Having completed this course, students should be able:

1. to demonstrate knowledge of current scientific advances in the physical and biological sciences as they impact upon Christian theology;
2. to identify and explain different models for the relationship of science and theology;
3. to explain and apply the Christian doctrine of creation in the context of modern science; and
4. to see the relevance and use the above insights within theological discussion, ministry, apologetics and evangelism.

Required Textbooks:

Ian Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers or Partners?* (London, SPCK, 2000)

Richard Dawkins, *A Devil's Chaplain* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2003)

Malcolm A. Jeeves and R. J. Berry. *Science, Life and Christian Belief: A Survey of Contemporary Issues*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1998).

John C. Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998)

Christopher Southgate (ed.) *God, Humanity and Cosmos: A Textbook in Science and Religion* (Harrisburg, PA, Trinity, 1999)

David Wilkinson, *God, Time and Stephen Hawking* (Kregel, 2002).

David Wilkinson, *Alone in the Universe? Aliens, the X-Files & God*. (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1998)

David Wilkinson, *Creation* (Illinois, IVP, 2002)

Background

The last three decades have transformed our understanding of the physical and biological Universe. The work of Stephen Hawking and others on the origin of the Universe has questioned the need for a Creator. The discovery of anthropic balances in the law and circumstance of the

Universe has led to a revival of the design argument, while the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence has given anthropology a cosmic dimension. The insights of chaos and quantum theory have demolished the idea of a mechanistic Universe, thus transforming any discussion of providence. Predictions for the future of the planet and the whole Universe paint a picture of futility which raises serious questions for eschatology. In addition, advances and claims in the areas of evolutionary theory, the human genome project and cloning have posed serious questions for the Christian understanding of the human person.

The Christian doctrine of creation cannot be developed in isolation from these insights. At the same time, these insights cannot solely develop the doctrine. Science, theology, philosophy and history need to be in mutual dialogue where they offer mutual enrichment.

Thus the last three decades in particular have demonstrated this dialogue and enrichment, both in academic and popular arenas. This module is concerned to explore this contemporary dialogue, taking seriously the contributions of both science and theology. At the same time it will pay careful attention to the historical dimension of the development of both science and theology.

Course Requirements 3 Unit Course

(1) Class Preparation and Participation (15% of final grade).

(2) Team projects (15% of final grade).

The aim of this project is to encourage team work and to see the importance of the science/religion debate to the media.

Each team to identify an issue in the media (ie television, movies, magazines, newspapers....) about science which impacts on the Christian faith. Then to produce a document of 500 words and post it to the discussion centre responding to the following questions:

1. Which issue have you chosen and why?
2. What theological questions are involved in this issue?
3. How could the church respond to this issue?

(3) Presentation (20% of final grade).

One presentation in your local church, housegroup, youth group or anywhere else felt appropriate, on one of the following subjects:

1. Does modern science disprove God?
2. What should be the attitude of Christians to developments in genetic engineering?
3. How should Christians view science?

The submission of the script of the presentation, an assessment of the discussion and any audio visuals materials used will provide the determination of the mark.

(4) Research Essay (50% of final grade).

An essay of 4000-5000 words, typed, double-spaced, with appropriate notes and bibliography, choosing one from the following titles:

1. What does the Big Bang theory of the origin of the Universe mean for Christian theology?
2. How have Christians responded to the theory of biological evolution? Which response demonstrates the most helpful model of the relationship between science and religion?
3. What has Genesis 1:1-2:4 to contribute to issues in the physical and biological sciences?
4. Can the insights of modern science be used in evangelism and apologetics?
5. Will artificial intelligence ever become spiritual?
6. In a much quoted paper given at the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1967, the historian Lyn White argued that Christianity bears 'a huge burden of guilt' for the environmental crisis. Is this fair?
7. Review and critique Philip Johnson's book 'Darwin on Trial'.
8. How can Christians respond to Richard Dawkins?

In addition, students may be able to suggest their own essay title in consultation with the lecturer.

Course Reading: Recommended Books

The following books are recommended for reading as background for the course. They are general introductions and give a range of views from atheistic to evangelical Christian

- D. Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix*, (Oxford, Lion, 2001)
I. Barbour, *Nature, Human Nature and God* (London: SPCK, 2003)
R. Bauckham and T. Hart, *Hope Against Hope: Christian Eschatology in Contemporary Context*, (London, DLT, 1999).
R.J. Berry, *The Care of Creation*, (Leicester, IVP, 2000)
R. J. Berry, *God's Book of Works: The Nature and Theology of Nature* (London: Continuum, 2003)
J.H. Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge, CUP, 1991)
P. Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1997)
C. Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1992)
P. Davies, *The Mind of God*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992)
R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988)
W.A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge between Science & Theology*. (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002).
S.J. Dick, ed. *Many Worlds: The New Universe, Extraterrestrial Life and the Theological Implications*. (Radnor: Templeton Foundation Press, 2000).
W. Drees, *Religion, Science and Naturalism* (Cambridge, CUP, 1996)
N. Gegersen and J.W. Van Huyssteen, (eds.) *Rethinking Theology and Science: Six Models for the Current Dialogue*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998)
N.H. Gregerson, W.B. Drees, and U. Gorman (eds.). *The Human Person in Science and Theology*. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000).
P. Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1998)

- J. F Haught, *Science & Religion: From Conflict to Conversion*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1995).
- S.W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, (London: Bantam, 1988)
- S.W. Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell*. (London: Bantam, 2001).
- P. Hefner, *The Human Factor: Evolution, Culture and Religion*, (Fortress, 1993)
- E. Lucas, *Can we believe in Genesis today*, (Leicester, IVP, 2001)
- A. McGrath, *Bridge Building*, (Leicester, IVP 1994)
- A. McGrath, *Science and Religion: An Introduction* (Oxford, Blackwells, 1999)
- P. Moore, *Babels Shadow. Genetic Technologies in a Fracturing Society* (Oxford, Lion, 2000)
- N. Murphy, *Theology and Science: A Radical Reformation Perspective*. (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora, 1997)
- A. Peacocke, *Paths from science towards God: The end of all our exploring*. (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001)
- T. Peters, (ed.) *Science & Theology: The New Consonance*. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998).
- T. Peters, R.J. Russell, and M. Welker, eds. *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).
- J.C. Polkinghorne and M. Welker, eds. *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology*. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000).
- J. Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science and Understanding* (London, SPCK, 2001)
- J.C. Polkinghorne, *The God of Hope and the End of the World* (London: SPCK, 2002)
- M. Rees, *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces that Shape the Universe* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2000)
- H. Ross, *Beyond the Cosmos* (Colorado Springs, Navpress, 1999).
- C.A. Russell, *Cross-Currents: Interactions between science and faith* (Christian Impact, London, 1997).
- R. J. Russell, W. R. Stoeger, and G. V. Coyne, (eds.) *Physics, Philosophy and Theology* (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory, 1988)
- W. Van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel? Theology and Science in a Postmodern World* (Harrisburg, Trinity, 1998)
- H. Van Till, *The Fourth Day, What the Bible and the Heavens Are Telling Us About Creation*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986)
- F. Watts (ed.) *Science Meets Faith: Theology and Science in Conversation* (London, SPCK 1998).
- G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas, 1987).
- M. Wertheim, *Pythagoras' Trousers: God, Physics, and the Gender Wars*. (W.W. Norton & Co., 1997).
- D. Wilkinson and R. Frost, *Thinking Clearly About God and Science* (Crowborough, Monarch, 2000)
- D. Wilkinson, *The Power of the Force: The Spirituality of the Star Wars Films*, (Oxford, Lion, 2000).
- M.W. Worthing, *God, Creation, and Contemporary Physics*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996)
- R. T. Wright, *Biology Through the Eyes of Faith*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989)
- J. Wyatt, *Matters of Life and Death* (Leicester, IVP, 1999).

